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ABSTRACT

The "Context of Discourse" is a major component of a proposed model of the outcomes of literacy. The Context of Discourse is defined by three major components (situation, vantage points, and content and language) and the 10 related outcomes of literacy (including purpose, audience, point of view, disciplinary perspective, and conceptual and theoretical orientation). There are 36 combinations of variables in the model creating different interactions and outcomes. Each category of variable contributes to the focus, frame of reference or substance of discourse. Testing the validity of the model takes several directions: (1) the conceptual definitions need to be validated by establishing interrater agreements that show these components exist; (2) the postulates need to be clearly expressed as testable hypotheses; and (3) an assessment system needs to be developed. The proposed model is one way out of seriously limited and politically narrow views of literacy. Proposing such a different model requires that implications for assessment and development of appropriate measures be considered. (Three figures representing various aspects of the model are included.) (RS)

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A Model of Components For the Outcomes of Literacy

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The purpose of this paper is to propose a model of the outcomes of literacy. This model may be used to direct the collection of data to establish the validity of each identified outcome and the relationships among them.

The construct of the outcomes of literacy proposed has two major components (1) The Context of Discourse and (2) The Understanding and The Expression of Thought and Emotion. The focus of this paper is on the selected outcomes that constitute The Context of Discourse. In discussing The Context of Discourse, we will describe individual outcomes,depict the possible combinations and the relationships among the outcomes, and identify directions for testing the validity of the model proposed.

The Context of Discourse

The literate individual strives for more than literal and inferential comprehension of text. In doing so, the literate individual attempts to be sensitive to receptive and expressive dimensions of the outcomes of literacy as delineated in the portion of the model that focuses on The Context of Discourse. The 3 major components and the 10 related outcomes of literacy for The Context of Discourse component

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are given below.

In our proposed model of Outcomes of Literacy, The Context of Discourse is defined by three components - Situation, Vantage Points and Content and Language. Preliminary conceptual definitions are as follows:

The Context of Discourse: Discourse that is created from a specific context that consists of a well-defined situation, a particular vantage point and a body of thought that shapes the content and selects the language.

Situation: a primary variable consisting of purpose, time and place, and audience. Conscious decisions about purpose are made here which interact with audience, time and place. Effects creation and consequences of the message.

Vantage Points: handling multiple interpretations and different points of view, shapes readers responses, disciplinary perspectives, conceptual orientation and point of view.

Content and Language: subject and form, significance and ability to make a judgment about ideas, consists of themes and degree of abstract expression, sophisticated organizational thought processes move beyond ethnocentic thinking, recognizing the richness of concepts.

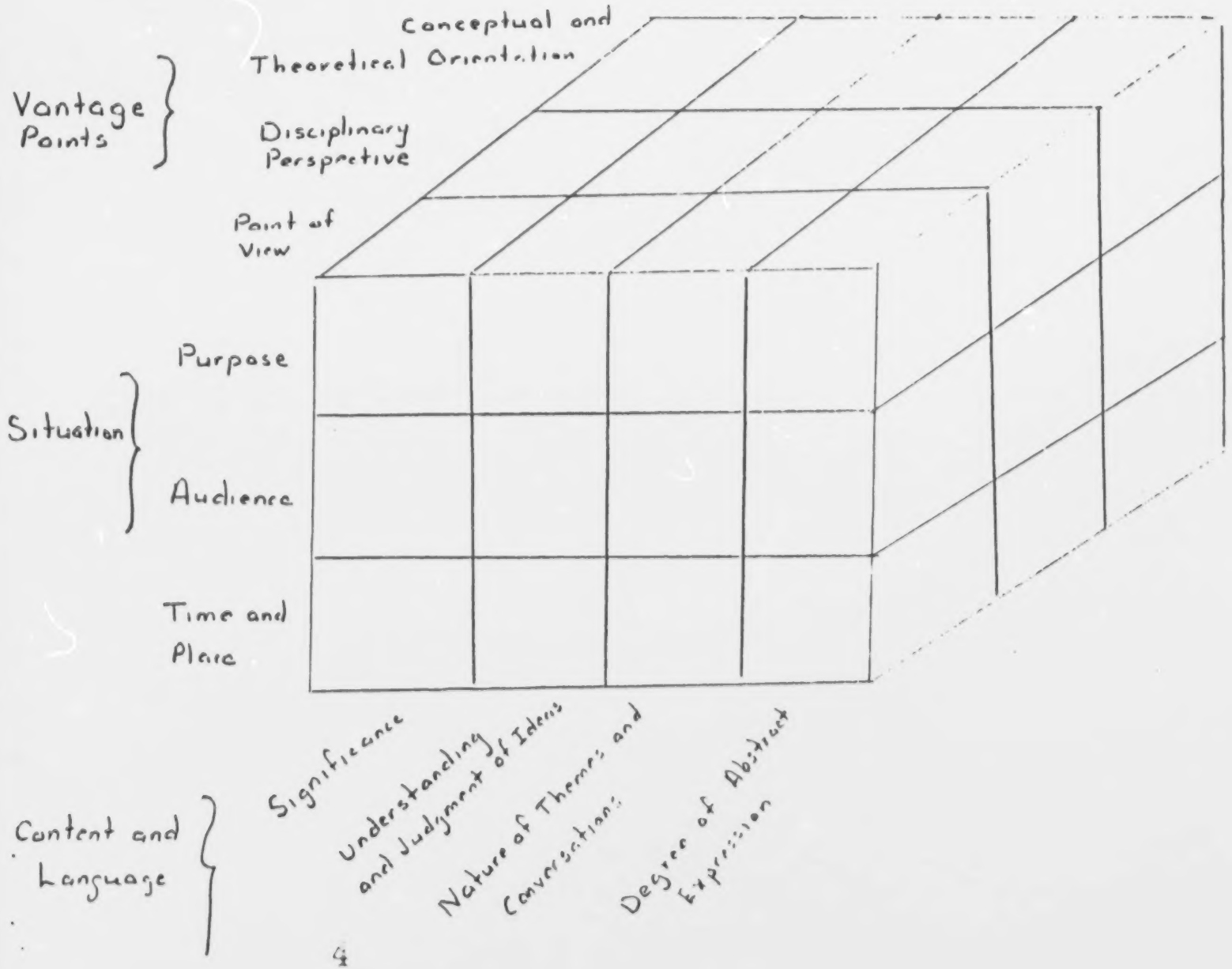
Each of the 3 major components consists of related outcomes of literacy. They are depicted in visual 1. The conceptual definitions of those 10 outcomes are presented here.

Situation, the first of the three components, consists of purpose, audience and time and place. These three outcomes interact as determinants of the concept of situation. Preliminary conceptual definitions are as follows:

Purpose: This is the conscious decision about the goal of text. It may be both explicit and implicit in its occurence. Sometimes it may be called intention.

Visual 1

The Context of Discourse



Audience: This is the receiver of message and sometimes the reason for the message.

Time and Place: Physical, sociological, historical, intellectual or personal, real or hypothetical, where and how

Vantage Points, the second of the three components, consists of conceptual and theoretical orientation, disciplinary perspectives and point of view. The preliminary conceptual definitions are as follows:

Conceptual and Theoretical Orientation: Organized structures within and across disciplines representing different positions on a body of knowledge. Each orientation allows for different interpretation of the data collected. Major intellectual problems are framed in a conceptual or theoretical orientation so that hypotheses may be generated to direct inquiry, collect data and interpret findings. Controversy arises when more than one theoretical position exists.

Disciplinary Perspectives: Various disciplines frame problems and bodies of knowledge differently. The same problem may be approached differently by a historian, a sociologist or a psychologist.

Point of View: The position from which observations are made, reported and interpreted. First person, third person, omniscient views are examples. More generally, different ideological positions are considered different points of view too. Multiple points of view can sometimes be reconciled in a dialectic that creates a synthesis of these views and moves thinking forward.

Content and Language, the third of the three components, consists of significance, understanding and judgment of ideas, nature of themes and conversations and abstract and symbolic language.

Significance: This is the recognition of the importance of ideas and a particular idea in relationship to a body of "facts" or ideas. The writer and receiver must have the ability to see how an idea represents a major change in thinking about a particular topic or issue. An element of insight operates here.

Understanding and Judgment of Ideas: This means comprehending sufficiently well to determine the value or the potential of ideas. This means going beyond basic comprehension of message and making a studied evaluation with clear criteria in mind. It is not totally separate from significance.

Nature of Themes and Conversations: This is the substance of discourse. Is it broadly conceptualized dialogue or muttered exchanges? Conceptual frameworks are conveyed through theme making it a different vehicle for information and ideas than plot. Themes carry universal thruths. Generalizations carry testable hypothesis.

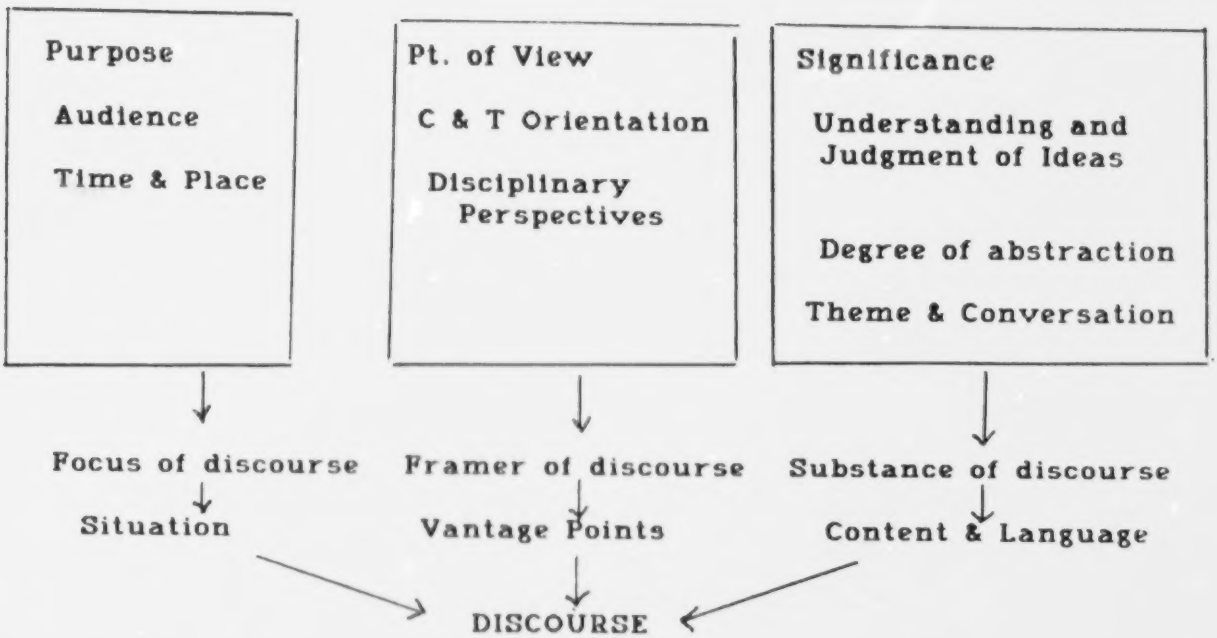
Degree of Symbolic and Abstract Expression: This is the level of language used to convey ideas. It varies from concrete to abstract, literal to figurative, etc. Different ideas vary in their use of expression, some by choice, some by necessity.

The outcomes of literacy presented here constitute the components of our model and give it its conceptual boundaries. The outcomes have been derived from the literature and some speculations and they need to be tested empirically. The next section of the paper proposes postulates for the model as a way to refine the conceptualization that we are proposing as well as give direction to developing testable hypotheses for evaluating the validity of the model.

Identifying Relationships Among The Outcomes

There are 36 combinations of variables in the model creating different interactions and outcomes. Each category of variable

contributes to the focus, frame of reference or substance of discourse as represented in this visual example.



Several relationships of these components might be expressed as follows:

1. <u>Situation</u> appears to be the simplest and primary determinant of the context of discourse. In the case of expressive skills it may be the least controllable variable. It is defined by purpose, audience and time and place. It is a dependent factor in relationship to purpose, audience and time and place. It is one of three independent factors in relationship to situation, vantage

points and content and language with discourse as the dependent factor.

2. Vantage Points may be a product of the situation and your desire to communicate your message. It also may cause the most difficulty in reception of messages. Listeners and readers must have sufficient background to detect variances in the vantage points chosen from the communication. Vantage Point is a dependent factor of conceptual or theoretical orientation, disciplinary perspectives and point of view.

3. Content and Language may be thought of as the form and substance of discourse. They also are a function of the constraints imposed by situation and vantage points. Content and language are dependent factors of the signficance, understanding and judgment of ideas, nature of themes and conversations and degree of symbolic and abstract language.

4. Purpose, which remains steadfast once it is determined, contributes to the focus of the discourse. It is a conscious decision on the part of the sender of a message. It also contributes to the substance and style of text by acting as a selection mechanism for content.

5. Audience as an entity remains stable changing only when the sender chooses a different audience. Like purpose and time and place, it gives focus to the discourse. An audience has general characteristics that do not change while the discourse is being

transmitted so the sender of the message has a guidepost for tone, degree of complexity that is useful in conveying the entire message.

6. Anticipated audiences direct both the writing and the expected interpretation of the text. When a writer identifies his/her audience careful selections are made about what message is sent and how based upon the writer's assessment of how a message will be received and interpreted.

7. Audience and purpose may be independent but interactive with each other. Each factor may be determined separately from each other, but they may interact to create a message of varying degrees of complexity.

8. Time and place may be dependent upon purpose and audience. Decisions about where to say things depends upon what you wish to accomplish and the degree of privacy needed to address your audience.

9. There is a myriad of combinations of these variables around any given topic or issue. All of these combinations constitute frames of reference for an issue. As one becomes more literate then these combinations become more of a consideration in understanding discourse.

10. Issues arise from different combinations of vantage points.

11. Multiple perspectives such as point of view, disciplinary

perspective and conceptual or theoretical orientation lead to synthesis, reconceptualizations and new directions of ideas and issues.

12. Vantage points represent conflicts and questioning components in discourse. As one considers more aspects of an issue more perspectives and interpretations emerge from observations. These differences often lead to different conclusions which are questionable from other positions on an issue.

13. Until one understands a topic from various vantage points it is difficult to determine and judge the significance of idea

14. Themes require symbolic language to be conveyed

15. Certain genre require specific forms of abstract or symbolic expression

The model of outcomes of literacy is a new formulation, and it requires an assessment system that is not available now. Research on this model and related hypotheses about literacy requires that we address three fundamental concerns of assessment : (1) defining what is to be measured (2) determining how such measurement should be made and (3) deciding how the measurements should be scored and interpreted. The major portion of this paper has addressed the first concern -

conceptually defining the construct of the outcomes of literacy and identifying some of the postulates that constitute this model. The final portion of this paper considers directions for testing the validity of the model. Testing the validity of this model will take several directions. First, the conceptual definitions need to be validated by establishing inter-rater agreement that show that these components exist. Traditional methods of establishing agreement should work sufficiently here. Second, the postulates presented need to be clearly expressed as testable hypotheses. Doing so then leads us to the third concern of developing an assessment system that allows us to measure the construct that we are proposing. To accomplish this third and crucial goal we must address three general principles relevant to establishing an appropriate assessment system for this model. The three principles are related to generating responses, scoring those responses, and identifying the nature of the stimuli. The three principles are:

(1) all human beings actively construct knowledge and a view of the world which they then actively modify based upon feedback, new information and experimentation

(2) the system or criteria used to "score" or evaluate student responses and, in instructional situations, make the assessment results known to the learner

(3) this model will require the use of complex assessment stimuli rather then the "simple" assessment stimuli typically used.

Each of these principles has implications for the assessment goals and methodology needed to validate our model of outcomes of literacy. In the case of the first principle, the responses generated must reveal both a product and a process. The product is the actual conceptualization the individual holds of a subject, issue or idea that shows the presence of a particular outcome. The process is revealed in the presence of change from initial conceptualization to changed conceptualization as shaped by feedback, new information and experitmentation. This means that what the learner shows to the evaluator will move toward restructuring as the reconceptualization process develops. It also means that structures representing the concepts can be made visible to the evaluator. In the case of the second principle, the system for scoring must be sensitive to various representations of conceptual structures and also to the processes by which the structures emerge. Both the first and the second principle require substantial amounts of response and and fluid measures for observing structures. The third principle, in combination with the first two principles, suggests that text be more representative of contextualized scenarios that prompt responses congruent with the components of the outcomes of literacy. The traditional technique of having a brief text and multiple-choice type questions will not tap the

kind of literacy we are proposing in the model presented here.

The model proposed here represents a different way of thinking about literacy than is presently developed in the discussions of literacy today. It is proposed as one way out of seriously limited and politically narrow views of literacy. Proposing such a different model requires that we consider the implications for assessment and develop appropriate measures.

Outcomes of Literacy

The Context of Discourse

Situation

- Purpose
- Audience
- Time and Place

Vantage Points

- Conceptual and Theoretical Orientation
- Disciplinary Perspective
- Point of View

Content and Language

- Significance
- Understanding and Judgment of Ideas
- Nature of Themes and Conversations
- Degree of Symbolic and Abstract Expression

The Understanding and The Expression of Thought and Emotion

Awareness of Human Experiences and Dilemmas

Social Sensitivity
Empathy
Tolerance
Openness

Responsible Communication of Individual and Collective Thought

Schemas

Shared Knowledge
Informed Opinions and Decisions

Cognitive Activities

Questioning
Systematic Inquiry
Specialized Schemas

Judicious Thought

Selection of Appropriate Forms of Communication
Flexibility in Thought and Language

Aesthetic Forms

Creative Expression
Eloquence of Language
Metaphoric Thinking

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